

Ramadan and American Muslims

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Ramadan in America

By Imam Suhaib Webb* | IIP Digital Contributor | 13 May 2014

When I travel to other countries, one of the first questions I'm asked is, "What is Ramadan like in America?" For American Muslims, like Muslims everywhere, it is a time to reconnect with God by observing fasts and through personal reflection and an increase in prayers and charity.

Most Islamic centers stay open all the time so it is easy to visit one during the month and worship. Oftentimes, there are lectures held in the mosque, so in addition to the acts mentioned above, there are opportunities to rekindle an intellectual interest in faith.

Guests frequent Islamic centers in higher numbers. Non-Muslim family members accompany recent converts, co-workers share a meal with a friend, and, in conjunction with universities, schools or other religious institutions, guests are invited to experience the food and spiritual blessings of the month. Oftentimes, civil and political leaders visit centers,

acknowledging the important contributions of American Muslims.

Most mosques host daily iftars — a dinner at the time of breaking the fast. You find everything on the menu, from strictly American cuisine to choices from Southeast Asia, Arab countries, Africa and Europe. It is a food lover's dream. Extra prayers are held at night, usually led by a skilled reciter of the Quran, and the community experiences a spiritual high that is unique to this blessed month.

Ramadan in America brings together an individual sense of responsibility with a greater sense of community and pride. Ramadan here is unique, just like it is unique in other countries, and a time for stomachs to stay empty while hearts are filled.

Versi Bahasa Indonesia *Ramadan di Amerika*

Saat saya bepergian ke luar negeri, salah satu pertanyaan yang sering diajukan pada saya adalah: "Bagaimana rasanya Ramadan di Amerika?" Sebagai Muslim Amerika, sama halnya dengan Muslim di tempat lain, Ramadan merupakan saat untuk mendekatkan diri pada Allah melalui puasa, introspeksi diri dan memperbanyak ibadah serta sedekah. Sebagian besar pusat-pusat kegiatan Islam buka setiap saat untuk memudahkan jemaah yang hendak beribadah di bulan Ramadan. Sebagai tambahan aktivitas ritual ibadah, banyak masjid yang mengadakan berbagai ceramah yang memberikan kesempatan bagi umat untuk memperbarui pengetahuan agama mereka.

Jumlah pengunjung pada pusat kajian Islam pun meningkat di bulan Ramadan. Keluarga non-Muslim menemani anggota keluarganya yang mualaf, teman sekerja berbagi makanan dengan teman lainnya, dan melalui kerjasama yang melibatkan perguruan tinggi, sekolah-sekolah atau institusi keagamaan, para tamu diundang untuk menikmati makanan dan merasakan keberkahan bulan Ramadan. Seringkali, pemimpin masyarakat sipil maupun politik, datang ke pusat-pusat kegiatan Islam sebagai pengakuan akan pentingnya kontribusi warga Muslim Amerika.

Sebagian besar masjid mengadakan iftar/buka puasa bersama. Anda akan menemukan berbagai menu, mulai dari masakan khas Amerika sampai beragam makanan dari Asia Tenggara, kawasan Arab, Afrika dan Eropa. Bagi para pencinta kuliner, mencicipi keberagaman hidangan buka puasa seperti ini merupakan impian mereka. Ibadah tambahan diakukan pada waktu malam hari, biasanya dipimpin oleh seorang yang pandai membaca Qur'an, dan masyarakat memperoleh pengalaman rohani yang luar biasa di bulan yang penuh berkah.

Ramadan di Amerika menyatukan rasa tanggungjawab individu dengan rasa kebanggaan dan kebersamaan dalam komunitas. Ramadan di Amerika itu unik, sama uniknya dengan Ramadan di negara-negara lainnya, suatu momen dimana jiwa tetap terisi walau pun perut kosong.

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Source: <http://goo.gl/KCrD7Z>

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Fast, Pray, Cook: Ramadan in the U.S. Kitchen

By G. Willow Wilson* | IIP Digital Contributor | 01 April 2014



The week before Ramadan, I ordered a \$65 jumbo box of medjool dates.

"By the grace of God, 100% organic," the advertisement read. "Highest quality." I find myself thinking,

"At that price, they'd better be." One more thing ticked off my list, along with halal free-range chicken — raised by a conservative Christian farming community known as the Amish, butchered by Muslims — dried apricots, phyllo dough for sweets and a half-million other things, because for the designated cook in any Muslim household, the holy month of fasting involves stocking up on food.

When you're only eating one big meal a day, you've got to make it count. During the day, Ramadan might be a month of self-discipline and restraint, but at night it becomes a time of feasting: Seasonal eats enjoyed with family and friends are as big a part of the month's festivities in America as anywhere else the fast is observed. Our local community in Seattle is very diverse, so gatherings are a combination of many different cultural traditions: Tunisian friends bring flasks of minted green tea; Egyptians, platters of flaky dessert pastries to be placed alongside filling home-cooked American staples like fried chicken and biscuits. Something special happens at that wonderful moment when the call to prayer rises up from the nearest iPhone (there's an app for that) and you descend on a table of lovingly prepared traditional foods.

Yes, Ramadan is a time for spiritual re-

flection, a month when Muslims around the world deepen their practice through fasting, reciting Quran and giving to charity. And whenever anybody takes a moment to rhapsodize about the food, there is inevitably one person waiting in the wings to say, "Food is not the point. You shouldn't even be thinking about food." Okay, brother. But who do you think is making that biryani you eat at sunset? It doesn't cook itself.

For me, preparing the evening meal has itself become a form of ibadah: an act of worship and striving for God. Even a dish you've cooked a hundred times before gets tricky when you can't taste as you go and adjust the ingredients accordingly. Is there too much salt? Not enough garlic? You won't know until sunset, when you and your guests will find out at the same moment whether your instincts served you well. Cooking while fasting is a unique experience, not least because you're surrounded by the perfume of food you can't eat. Very early on, I discovered that I'm never tempted to sneak a bite of something — if anything, cooking the evening meal serves to emphasize the purpose of my fast, defining my service both to God and to the people who will break their fasts with the food I've prepared.

Eating good food with people you love brings an essential but often overlooked element to religious practice: joy. You're filled with gratitude to God to be sitting at that table (or in traditional households, on that floor) with those particular friends, able to enjoy a meal together after a day of intense abstinence. A lot of people around the world aren't so lucky. Part of the point of Ramadan is remembering how fortunate you are, and endeavoring to make life a little better for people who have less. Even as we enjoy our evening meal, prayers and alms are winging their way

to those for whom the sun sets on war, famine and heartbreak. As we open our homes and tables to our friends, we open our hearts to you.

Versi Bahasa Indonesia

Puasa, Ibadah, Masak: Ramadan di Dapur Amerika.

Seminggu sebelum Ramadan, saya memesan satu box kurma seharga 65 dolar. "Insya Allah, 100% organik," tertera pada label. "Kualitas tertinggi." Membuat saya berpikir, "ada harga ada kualitas." Satu barang lagi dicoret dari daftar belanja saya, bersama dengan ayam buras—dari peternakan komunitas umat Kristen konservatif yang dikenal sebagai kelompok Amish, dan disebelih oleh Muslim—aprikot kering, adonan phyllo untuk membuat pengangan bercita rasa manis, dan setengah juta hal lainnya, karena bagi seorang yang bertugas memasak di setiap rumah tangga Muslim, bulan puasa berarti juga memastikan kecukupan ketersediaan bahan-bahan makanan.

Bila anda hanya makan besar satu kali sehari, persediaan makanan merupakan hal yang harus diperhitungkan. Pada siang hari, Ramadan mungkin merupakan bulan untuk mendisiplinkan dan mengendalikan diri, tetapi pada malam hari, Ramadan adalah suatu perayaan: sajian makanan musiman yang dinikmati bersama keluarga dan teman-teman adalah bagian terbesar dari kemeriahan perayaan bulan Ramadan baik di Amerika maupun di tempat lainnya. Komunitas Muslim di Seattle sangat beragam dan pertemuan kami mencerminkan kombinasi berbagai tradisi budaya yang berbeda: teman-teman dari Tunisia membawa termos berisi teh hijau, orang-orang Mesir membawa kue pastri sebagai hidangan penutup yang ditempatkan berdampingan bersama makanan khas Amerika seperti ayam goreng dan bisikuit. Momen istimewa tiba, ketika azan me-

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Ramadan Quizzes

Answer all the questions correctly. We will draw 12 winners and each will get 4 issues of *Islamic Horizons* magazine and an IRC coffee mug.

I. The estimated-number of American Muslims population in 2010 according to Pew Research Survey on Religion and Public Life is:

- A. More than 3,6 million
- B. Nearly 2,6 million
- C. Less than 1,6 million

2. The number of mosques in the U.S. based on the 2011 CAIR survey is:

- A. 2,106
- B. 2,160
- C. 2,610

3. One of the institutions below does not control the halal certification in America:

- A. U.S. Department of Agriculture
- B. Islamic Services of America
- C. Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America.

4. This American Muslim rap group performed in Indonesia in 2012:

- A. Mustafa Davis
- B. Native Dean
- C. Tayyibah Taylor

5. The following act does not reflect the religious freedom in the U.S.:

- A. The U.S. government protects and treats people of all faiths as well as non-believers equally

- B. American Muslims face a lot of discriminations in the U.S. due to its small number of population
- C. American Muslims have the right to act on their religious beliefs, unless those actions harm others

Before July 26, 2014, email your answers to:

ircjakarta@state.gov

and put "Ramadan Quizzes" as the email subject. Please also include the following info in your email:

Name:
Institutions:
Occupation:
Cell Phone:
Complete Address:

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manggil dari aplikasi iPhone dan anda mendatangi meja makan, tempat dimana berbagai hidangan tradisional tersaji dan tersusun dengan cantik.

Memang betul, Ramadan adalah waktu untuk melakukan refleksi spiritual, dimana selama sebulan, umat Muslim di seluruh dunia memperdalam takwa dan ibadahnya melalui puasa, membaca Quran dan beramal. Dan setiap kali seseorang menunjukkan antusiasme terhadap makanan yang terhidang, akan selalu ada pihak yang berpendapat bahwa, "Makanan bukanlah hal utama. Bahkan, untuk memikirkannya saja, tidaklah patut anda lakukan." Baiklah saudaraku. Tapi menurut anda siapakah yang memasak briyani yang anda makan pada saat magrib? Briyani tersebut tidak matang dengan sendirinya.

Bagi saya, mempersiapkan hidangan makan malam selama bulan puasa adalah ibadah. Memasak makanan, yang sudah pernah anda masak beratus-ratus kali sebelumnya, menjadi hal yang sulit

karena anda tidak bisa mencicipinya untuk mendapatkan rasa yang diinginkan. Apakah keasinan? Apakah bawang putihnya sudah cukup?. Ketepatan insting memasak anda hanya akan diketahui di saat magrib, ketika anda dan tamu anda mulai makan makanan tersebut. Memasak di bulan puasa juga merupakan pengalaman yang unik dan sangat bermakna karena anda terus menerus mencium aroma sedap dari makanan yang tidak bisa anda makan. Sejak awal, saya tidak pernah tergoda untuk mencuri makan, dan yang utama, memasak makan malam di bulan puasa mengukuhkan tujuan saya berpuasa, menunjukkan wujud bakti saya, baik kepada Allah dan orang-orang yang akan berbuka puasa dengan makanan yang sudah saya siapkan.

Menikmati makanan enak dengan orang-orang tercinta menciptakan elemen penting dalam praktik beribadah, yang sering tidak terlihat, yaitu kebahagiaan. Anda dipenuhi rasa syukur kepada Allah karena dapat duduk mengitari meja makan (atau di lantai dalam keluarga tradisional) bersama teman-teman menikmati makanan setelah sehari

berpuasa makan. Ada banyak orang di berbagai belahan dunia yang tidak beruntung. Ramadan mengingatkan betapa beruntungnya anda dan anda harus berusaha keras membantu orang lain yang kekurangan. Ketika kita menikmati makan malam, segala doa dan sedekah akan terkirim dengan cepat kepada mereka yang pada saat maghrib berada di tengah-tengah kancang perang, mengalami bencana kelaparan dan merasakan kesedihan yang sangat mendalam. Saat kami membuka rumah dan meja kami untuk para sahabat, kami membuka hati kami untuk anda.

*G. Willow Wilson, seorang mualaf (Muslim convert), nominator Eisner Award, adalah pengarang *The Butterfly Mosque*, Cairo: A Graphic Novel dan seri buku komik berjudul Air. Novel terbarunya adalah *Alif the Unseen* (2012). Dia juga menulis naskah untuk seri Marvel Comics yang menampilkan pahlawan super dari kota Jersey, Kamala Khan, seorang garis Muslim Amerika-Pakistan

Sumber: <http://goo.gl/oyOzsP>

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Walk-in Visitors
(by appointment only):
Monday to Friday; from 07:30 to 16:00
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Resources on American Muslim



Learn more about American Muslims from a wide range of resources from ebooks to videos produced by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs and other prominent organizations.

ONLINE PUBLICATIONS

American Muslims

IIP eBook, 01 April 2014

Complete ebook is available in PDF at <http://goo.gl/IqDp8M>

The American Mosque 2011

By Ihsan Bagby, January 2012

Link: <http://goo.gl/zNrAA>

Being Muslim in America
IIP Publication, April 2011
Link: <http://goo.gl/gQYlQn>

Certified Halal in the USA
IIP Pamphlet, 2012
Link: <http://goo.gl/C9M1Wi>

Future Global Muslim Population
Pew Research Report, 2011
Link: <http://goo.gl/Le0Dn4>

Islamic College Launched in California
IIP Digital, 2010
Link: <http://goo.gl/m2kjJl>

Islamophobia and Its Impact in the U.S.
CAIR, 2013
Link: <http://goo.gl/jWazKP>

IRC Info Pack on Ramadan U.S. and other topics
Link: <http://goo.gl/f0C6K9>

VIDEOS

Who Are American Muslims?
Link video: <http://goo.gl/q60rZ4>

Where Are American Muslims?
Link video: <http://goo.gl/JL5b3a>

How Do American Muslims Live Their Religion?
Link video: <http://goo.gl/7S70Fv>

What Do American Muslims Do?
Link video: <http://goo.gl/epc0fe>

BOOKS & MAGAZINES

Explore more resources on American Muslims, Islam, pluralism, and religious tolerance related resources from IRC books and magazines/journals collections catalog at: <http://goo.gl/67Y7vU>

DATABASE: eLibraryUSA
<http://elibraryusa.state.gov>

eLibraryUSA, is a virtual library that provides access to 40 authoritative databases covering a broad range of resources on English learning, current and global issues, business news and information about science, technology, art and culture including on Islam and American Muslims.

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